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Letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward the attached text of a government statement issued by the Office of the President on 19 May 2000 concerning the Revolutionary United Front leader Foday Sankoh and the question of the Lomé Peace Agreement.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim M. **Kamara**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Government Statement

Friday, 19 May 2000

Members of the public will recall that Corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh was apprehended on Wednesday, 17 May, at approximately 6.00 a.m. Since then there have been conflicting reports about who has had custody of him. The Government therefore wishes to confirm that it has custody of Corporal Foday Sankoh, who is well, protected and in a safe location. Since his arrest, many questions have been raised by members of the local and international communities about the status of the Lomé Peace Agreement generally and Corporal Foday Sankoh specifically. The Government therefore wishes to clarify its position on this issue.

Firstly, the Government wishes to state that investigations into the events that have occurred since 8 July 1999, but more specifically since 30 April, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commenced hostile actions against United Nations personnel in Sierra Leone, are ongoing and the result of those investigations will determine the action the Government will take.

Secondly, the Government continued to be generally committed to the Lomé Peace Agreement. However, it is the Government's view that in order for the Lomé Peace Agreement to continue to be implemented, the following conditions need to be met by the RUF:

1. All the peacekeepers abducted should be released immediately and unconditionally. In addition, all the equipment seized from them, including that taken from the Guinean contingent earlier, must be returned.

2. The RUF should release all abductees, including women and children still held by them, as required by the Lomé Peace Agreement and subsequent resolutions of the international community.

3. The RUF must cease its attacks on government forces and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, which are still ongoing. Unless the RUF ceases its attacks, our troops will continue to defend themselves. In defending themselves, they will use the defensive strategy of taking over any position from which an attack is launched on their positions in order to neutralize the capacity of the enemy to continue attacking from that position.

4. The RUF must withdraw to positions they occupied prior to the coming into force of the ceasefire agreement last year, since it is now very clear that all the troop movements they have engaged in since then, including the overrunning of Sierra Leone army positions in Makeni, Kambia, etc., were aimed at seizing territory and eventually overrunning Freetown.

5. The RUF must withdraw from the Kono district, which they occupied in violation of the peace agreement and where they have been engaged in rampant illegal mining activities. This is essential, since it has now been incontrovertibly established that the RUF has been engaged in illegal mining and smuggling of diamonds, effectively starving the country of much-needed revenue. Indeed, the

United Nations Secretary-General himself, as reported on the BBC news on 16 May 2000, has emphasized this point.

6. The RUF should remove all impediments to the free movement of civilians and humanitarian organizations, including roadblocks.

7. The RUF must commit itself to the simultaneous and speedy disarmament of all armed groups. This exercise must commence immediately. Meanwhile, all those individual members of the RUF who are ready to disarm now are encouraged to do so. They should contact the nearest government office, where they will be given protection.